WAVE OF COORDINATED ATTACKS KILL AT LEAST 127 IN IRAQ 7

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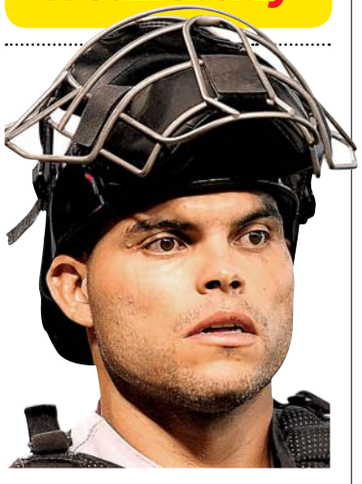
Wednesday



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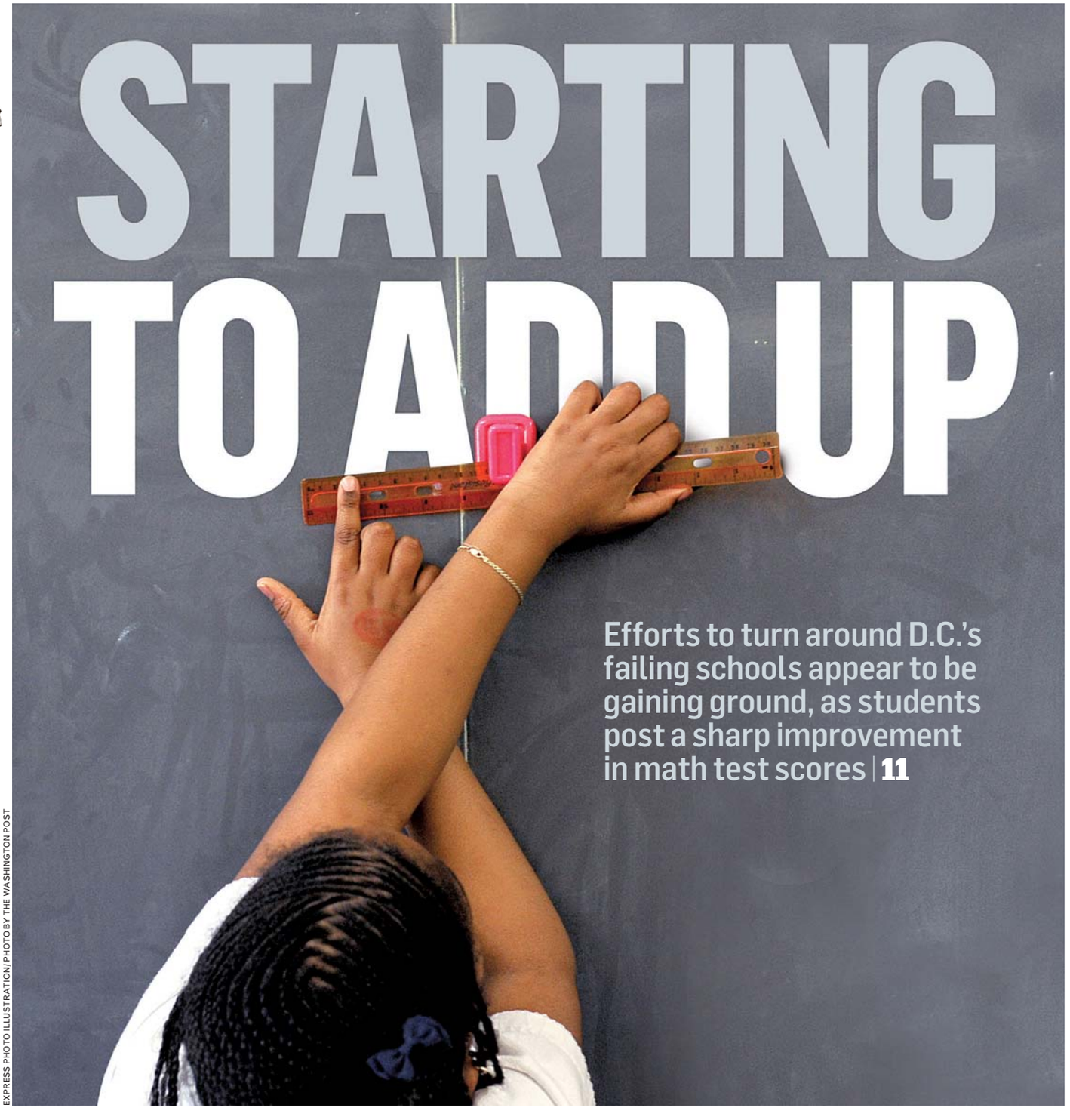
STARTING TO ADD UP



Efforts to turn around D.C.'s failing schools appear to be gaining ground, as students post a sharp improvement in math test scores | 11

EXPRESS PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/PHOTO BY THE WASHINGTON POST

eo

EYE OPENERS

That Buggy Could Have Mildly Startled Someone!

Police in central Pennsylvania say they arrested an Amish man on drunken-driving charges after he was found asleep in his moving buggy. Police say Elmer Stoltzfoos Fisher was slumped over and asleep in a slow-moving buggy on Sunday night. An off-duty officer reported seeing the horse pulling the buggy at a walking pace as it straddled the center line. **(AP)**

"We can't go outside and enjoy our pool and our yard. The entire house is a litter box."

— **MARK SIERENS,** OF SUNRISE, FLA., ON NEIGHBOR DEBRA JEAN HIGGINS' SMELLY HOME, WHICH HE SAYS HE CANNOT PASS WITHOUT GAGGING. SHE HAS BEEN FINED $600,000.

Santa Spends 2009 in the Weight Room

A Texas homeowner who adorned his front lawn with Michelangelo's "David" as Santa got more than jolly laughs. Parents started calling city officials saying their kids were asking why Santa was naked. Barry McBee relented, putting a pair of shorts, with a Christmas bow, on the statue. **(AP)**

The Big Picture

MICHAEL GOULDING/ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER/AP

KELLY SLATER SURFS in the second heat at the Quiksilver in Memory of Eddie Aikau big wave surf contest on the North Shore at Waimea Bay, Hawaii, on Tuesday. Slater scored a 98 out of 100 points on the wave, putting him in the lead. Aikau was the first lifeguard at Waimea Bay and an avid surfer. **(EXPRESS)**

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One-Drug Execution Successful

Lucasville, Ohio

Ohio executed a killer Tuesday by performing the nation's first lethal injection using a single drug, a supposedly less painful method than previous executions that required three drugs.

Rios

Kenneth Biros was pronounced dead at 11:47 a.m. Tuesday, about 10 minutes after one dose of thiopental sodium began flowing into his veins.

Experts predicted the thiopental sodium would take longer to kill the 51-year-old Biros than the conventional three-drug cocktail, but the 10 minutes it took him to die was about the usual length of time even under the method previously used by Ohio and still used by most other death penalty states.

Ohio overhauled its procedure after a failed attempt to execute Romell Broom in September. Executioners tried for two hours to find a suitable vein for injection, hitting bone and muscle in as many as 18 needle sticks that Broom, 53, said were very painful. **(AP)**

Obama: More Spending Critical

President proposes new efforts to reduce unemployment level

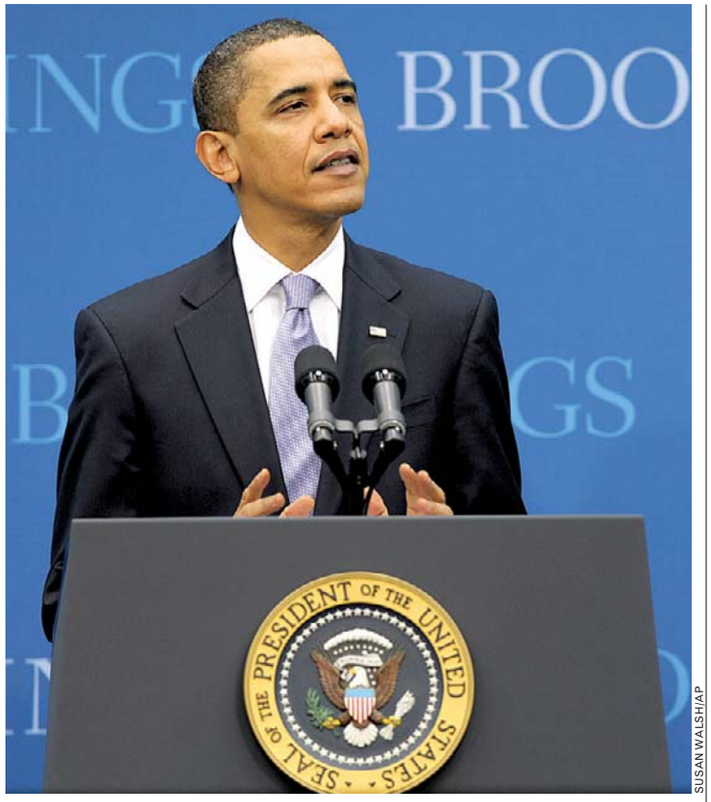
Washington

President Obama called for a major new burst of federal spending Tuesday, aiming to jolt the wobbly economy into a stronger recovery and reduce painfully persistent double-digit unemployment.

Despite Republican criticism about record deficits, Obama said the U.S. must continue to "spend our way out of this recession" as long as so many people are out of work. More than 7 million Americans have lost their jobs since the recession began, and the jobless rate stands at 10 percent, a statistic Obama called "staggering."

Congressional approval would be required for the new spending, the amount unspecified but sure to be at least tens of billions of dollars.

"We avoided the depression many feared," Obama said in a speech at the Brookings Institution. But, he added, "Our work is far from done."



SUSAN WALSH/AP

President Obama talks jobs on Tuesday at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

Obama did not give a price tag for the new package but said he would work with Congress on deciding how to pay for it.

Republicans ridiculed the president's speech and his parallel call for doing more to hold down government deficits.

"At least the president's proposal will result in one new job — he'll need to hire a magician to make this new deficit spending appear fiscally responsible," said Sen. Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, the senior Republican on the Senate Budget Committee. **TOM RAUM (AP)**

The Breakdown

Here are some of the key elements of the job creation package President Obama outlined Tuesday:

- Eliminating capital gains taxes on new investments in small businesses through 2010, if the investments are held for at least five years.
- An employment tax cut to encourage small business hiring.
- Up to $50 billion in new spending on construction projects.
- Rebates for homeowners to make energy-efficient improvements.
- Expansion of programs that use federal money to leverage private investments in projects that use clean energy.

GOOD GRIEF

A Tennessee mayor is apologizing for writing on his Facebook page that President Obama deliberately timed a speech last week on the Afghanistan war to block the "Peanuts" Christmas special. Russell Wiseman, mayor of Arlington, Tenn., e-mailed the media Monday to say he regrets offending anyone with what he described as a "poor attempt at tongue-in-cheek humor amongst friends." Wiseman has deleted his Facebook account. **(AP)**

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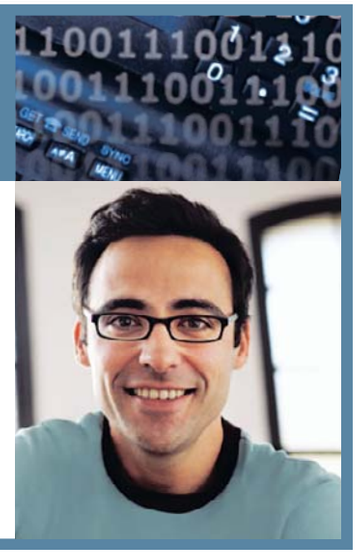

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Nation

General Backs War Plan

McChrystal: Target for Afghan pullout in 2011 can be met

Washington

The general in charge of the war in Afghanistan said Tuesday he expects to know by this time next year whether the new troop build-up is reversing Taliban momentum and he believes he will be able to draw down forces in 2011 without asking for more.

Gen. Stanley McChrystal, appearing before House and Senate panels a week after President Obama announced his new surge-and-exit strategy, said he had not recommended the 18-month expiration date for the surge that Obama applied and would have preferred more forces than he is being given. Still, he supported the plan without reservation.

"I'm comfortable with the entire plan, sir," McChrystal told a skeptical Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

MELINA MARA/TWP

Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal said: "The sober fact is that there are no silver bullets."

Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, who had voiced misgivings previously, also saluted the new approach. The two men sat side by side at a pair of Capitol Hill hearings long sought by Republicans critical of the lengthy White House review that yielded the decision to send an emergency infusion of 30,000 additional U.S. forces.

The revised battle strategy includes a plan to begin bringing some troops home in 18 months. How many troops leave would be determined by conditions on the ground.

"Results may come more quickly," McChrystal said. "But the sober fact is that there are no silver bullets. Ultimate success will be the cumulative effect of sustained pressure."

Eikenberry said the course outlined last week by Obama "offers the best path to stabilize Afghanistan and to ensure al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups cannot regain a foothold." (AP)

Senate Votes Down Abortion Rule for Health Bill

Washington

The Senate on Tuesday rejected an effort by abortion opponents to tighten restrictions in the health care overhaul bill on taxpayer dollars for the procedure, but it was unlikely to be the last word on the divisive issue.

By a vote of 54-45, the Senate sidetracked an amendment by Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., and Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, that would ban any insurance plan getting taxpayer dollars from offering abortion coverage. The restrictions mirrored provisions in the House-passed health care bill.

The Senate bill currently allows insurance plans to cover abortions but requires that they be paid for only with private money. The bill calls for insurance plans that would receive federal subsidies to strictly separate public funds from private dollars that would be used to pay for abortions.

"As our bill currently reads, no insurance plan in the new marketplace ... would be allowed to use public funds for abortion," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev. (AP)

Hearsay

"Certainly, his actions hurt me, and they caused consequences for me, but they don't ... take away from my self-esteem."

— **JENNY SANFORD,** WHO TOLD ABC'S BARBARA WALTERS SHE WOULDN'T HAVE STOOD BESIDE HER HUSBAND, S.C. GOV. MARK SANFORD, WHEN HE REVEALED HIS AFFAIR TO THE PRESS, EVEN IF HE'D ASKED.

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Nation

NATI HARNIK/AP

Students brave the snow on the University of Nebraska-Omaha campus Tuesday.

Huge Snowstorm Carpets Midwest

Travel halts; strong winds expected to bring on blizzards

Des Moines, Iowa

Fierce winds ripped away the roof of a police station, thousands of people lost power, and drivers stuck due to closed highways settled in to wait as storms swept out of the West to the nation's midsection Tuesday.

Much of the Upper Midwest was covered in deep snow, and strong winds Tuesday night were expected to create blizzard conditions. The storm had already blanketed much of the mountain west and drenched Southern California with rain.

With travel likely to get worse, officials were warning residents in parts of the West and Midwest to stay close to home. Blizzard warnings were issued for most of Iowa, and eastern Nebraska, southern Minnesota and southern Wisconsin.

"Anybody traveling tomorrow morning is really taking a huge risk, I would say — a risk of being stranded and not having anybody be able to help you for six or 12 hours, probably," Karl Jungbluth, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Johnston, Iowa, said Tuesday.

Jungbluth said a "classic, big, deepening winter storm" was affecting more than a dozen states. A foot or more of snow was expected in parts of Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. Wind gusts of up to 50 mph could create snow drifts of 8 to 15 feet.

"Snow and lots of it!" said Rose Jansen, assistant manager at Sparky's One Stop gas station in Schaller, Iowa. "We'll be here, no matter what." MELANIE S. WELTE (AP)

LATE VIEWING

This year's best meteor shower is coming to the U.S. Weather permitting, the peak time to view the Geminid meteor show will be around midnight Sunday when up to 140 meteors per hour could streak across the sky. Though not as famous as the Perseid meteor shower, the Geminids often put on a more dramatic display. Geminids are debris from a comet. (AP)

EU Leaders Soften Call For Divided Jerusalem

Jerusalem

European Union foreign ministers on Tuesday softened their call for a division of Jerusalem between Israel and the Palestinians, saying that the city should be shared but that the two sides should negotiate the details.

The statement, issued in Brussels, Belgium, marks a diplomatic victory for Israel in a developing contest with the Palestinians for international support.

A draft EU resolution initially referred to creation of a Palestinian state "with East Jerusalem as its capital" — language that, to Israel, appeared more decisive than the long-standing European and U.S. policy of supporting a negotiated resolution to the competing claims over the city.

The phrase was deleted from the final text, issued Tuesday. **HOWARD SCHNEIDER (THE WASHINGTON POST)**

Patriotic Rally

GENT SHKULLAKU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ALBANIANS WAVE flags during a rally in Tirana, Albania, Tuesday in support of the country's efforts to join the European Union and to commemorate a 1990 student uprising that helped end the country's communist regime.

ALAA AL-MARJANI/AP

Iraqi security forces and rescuers search for survivors after a bombing near the new Finance Ministry in Baghdad on Tuesday. Five blasts targeted government buildings.

Timed Blasts Kill 127 in Baghdad

Five attacks injure hundreds in worst violence in a month

Baghdad

A series of coordinated attacks struck Baghdad Tuesday, including two suicide car bombers and another vehicle that blew up near government sites. At least 127 were killed and hundreds were wounded in the worst wave of violence in the capital in more than a month, authorities said.

A total of five attacks, which also included a suicide car bomb on a police patrol, showed the ability of insurgents to strike high-profile targets in the heart of Baghdad and marked the third time since August that government buildings were targeted with multiple blasts that killed more than 100 people.

The bombings reinforced concerns about shortcomings in Iraqi security as U.S. forces plan their withdrawal, and parliament held an emergency session with many lawmakers demanding answers for apparent security lapses.

Iraq's military spokesman blamed the carnage on an alliance of al-Qaeda in Iraq and members of Saddam Hussein's banned Baath Party.

Violence has dropped sharply around Iraq in the past year, though insurgents have recently stepped up attacks at government sites.

The blasts — which struck near the Labor Ministry building, a court complex near the Iraqi-protected Green Zone and near the new site of the Finance Ministry after its previous building was destroyed in major attacks in August — marked the most serious violence in Baghdad since twin car bombs on Oct. 25 killed 155 people.

"What crime have we committed? Children and women were buried under debris. Why did [Iraqi troops] let this car bomb pass?" cried Ahmed Jabbar as he staggered through the debris near the new Finance Ministry building — an area where all cars pass through checkpoints. **BRIAN MURPHY (AP)**

Political Repercussions

The fallout from Tuesday's attacks could complicate Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's campaign for re-election on a platform that he has improved security, The Christian Science Monitor reported. Maliki now has more time to explain to voters how the blasts happened, after Iraq's presidential council said on Tuesday it would delay elections until March 7 — seven weeks later than originally planned. **(EXPRESS)**

Report: Brazil's Police Killed 11,000 in Six Years

Rio de Janeiro

Police in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo have killed more than 11,000 people in the past six years, many execution-style, according to a report released Tuesday by Human Rights Watch.

Few of the officers have been charged in the killings, which are often labeled in police reports as the deaths of suspects who resisted arrest, the report said.

The 122-page declaration echoes a 2008 United Nations finding that police in Brazil were responsible for a "significant portion" of 48,000 slayings the year before.

"Extrajudicial killing of criminal suspects is not the answer to violent crime," said Jose Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch.

Isabel Figueiredo, Brazil's coordinator-general of human rights and public safety, said authorities have launched a series of initiatives to confront the problem, including training police to respect human rights. **BRADLEY BROOKS (AP)**

World

STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A nurse treats a boy hurt by a stampede.

Stampede Kills Eight in China

Beijing

It was raining, and the hundreds of children leaving their evening classes raced down the narrow stairway closest to their dormitory. Someone stumbled — and the ensuing crush left eight children dead.

Television footage showed a pool of blood on one of the landings of the five-story building shortly after Monday night's stampede, which raised new concerns about safety in China's education system. One student told state media that the tangle of people reached the third floor. **(AP)**

Uganda Considers Anti-Gay Bill

Legislation would impose death penalty for some homosexuals

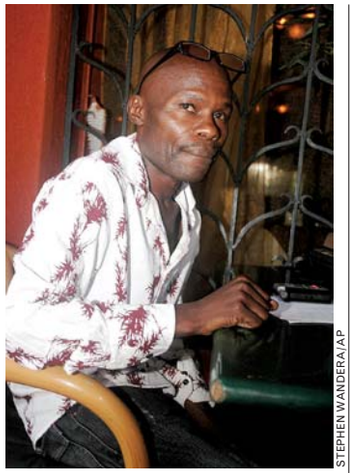
Kampala, Uganda

Proposed legislation would impose the death penalty for some gay Ugandans, and their family and friends could face up to seven years in jail if they fail to report them to authorities.

Even landlords could be imprisoned for renting to homosexuals.

Gay rights activists say the bill, which has prompted growing international opposition, promotes hatred and could set back efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. They believe the bill is part of a continentwide backlash because Africa's gay community is becoming more vocal.

"It's a question of visibility," said David Cato, who became an activist after he was beaten up four times, arrested twice, fired from his teaching job and outed in the press because he is gay. "When we come out and ask for our rights, they pass laws against us."



STEPHEN WANDERA/AP

Ugandan activist David Cato has spoken out against anti-gay legislation.

Legislation Details

The Ugandan legislation in its current form would mandate a death sentence for active homosexuals living with HIV or in cases of same-sex rape. "Serial offenders" also could face capital punishment, but the legislation does not define the term. Anyone convicted of a homosexual act faces life imprisonment. **(AP)**

The legislation has drawn global attention from activists across the spectrum of views on gay issues. The measure was proposed in Uganda following a visit by leaders of U.S. conservative Christian ministries that promote therapy for gays to become heterosexual.

However, at least one of those leaders has denounced the bill, as have some other conservative and liberal Christians in the U.S.

Gay-rights activists say the legislation is likely to pass. But the bill is still being debated and could undergo changes before a vote, which has not yet been set.

Gay rights activists abroad are focusing on the legislation. A protest against the bill is planned for Thursday in London.

David Bahati, the legislator sponsoring the bill, said he was encouraging "constructive criticism" to improve the law, but insisted strict measures were necessary to stop homosexuals from "recruiting" schoolchildren.

Uganda's ethics minister, James Nsaba Buturo, said the death sentence clause would probably be reviewed but maintained the law was necessary to counter foreign influence. He said homosexuality "is not natural in Uganda," a view echoed by some Ugandans. **GODFREY OLUKYA AND KATHARINE HOURELD (AP)**

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Tehran Rallies Continue

Basij members attack students as forces vow to end protests

Tehran, Iran

Thousands of members of the pro-government Basij paramilitary organization stormed the grounds of Tehran University on Tuesday and attacked a group of protesting students, several witnesses said as unrest continued in the capital after Monday's "Student Day" demonstrations.

Armed with steel clubs, electric batons, pepper spray and tear gas, the Basij members surrounded and later assaulted a group of several hundred students who had gathered in front of the university's technical faculty building, where running battles had occurred between the two groups the day before. Regular police units were out in full force in the streets surrounding the university.

> **"So far, we have shown restraint. From today, no leniency will be applied."**
>
> — GHOLAM HOSSEIN MOHSENI-EJEI, IRAN'S TOP PROSECUTOR, WARNING THAT THE JUDICIARY WILL NO LONGER TOLERATE OPPOSITION PROTESTERS.

"They broke the windows and cut some of us with the pieces of glass," said a student who gave only his first name, Hamed, and was interviewed by phone. "We lit fires in front of the faculty's entrance, but they poured in, and fights broke out in the hallways."

Witnesses said the protesters fought back, in some cases injuring members of the Basij, who fall under the command of the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The semiofficial Fars news agency accused student supporters of opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi of starting the clashes.

Protesters said more rallies would be held Wednesday.

A day after Iranian security forces and paramilitary groups used clubs, tear gas and electric batons to break up anti-government demonstrations, prosecutor Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei said authorities have no intention of letting the demonstrations, which have festered for six months, continue.

THOMAS ERDBRINK (THE WASHINGTON POST)

U.N.: Decade Likely to Be Hottest

Report comes amid dispute over draft deals at climate talks

Copenhagen

This decade is on track to become the warmest since records began in 1850, and 2009 could rank among the top five warmest years, the U.N. weather agency reported Tuesday on the second day of a pivotal 192-nation climate conference.

Only the U.S. and Canada experienced cooler conditions than average, the World Meteorological Organization said, although Alaska had the second-warmest July on record.

In central Africa and southern Asia, this will probably be the warmest year, but overall, 2009 will "be about the fifth-warmest year on record," said Michel Jarraud, secretary-general of the WMO.

Meanwhile, negotiators at the two-week talks in Copenhagen turned Tuesday to "metrics," "gas inventories" and other dense technicalities, as delegates worked to craft a global deal to rein in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and stem climate change.

POLFOTO/CLAUS BJORN LARSEN/AP

Members of NGOs rally near the main venue of the U.N. climate summit in Copenhagen.

Governments jockeyed for position leading up to the finale late next week, when more than 100 national leaders, including President Obama, will converge on Copenhagen for the final days of bargaining.

Drafts circulated at the summit showed marked differences between rich and poor nations over how to structure a final deal. A leaked Danish document that was submitted before the talks came under criticism from climate activists as an attempt by rich nations to exclude them from the bargaining.

"It is vitally important that vulnerable countries are part of the debate," Oxfam spokesman Antonio Hill said. CHARLES J. HANLEY (AP)

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Local

In Brief

JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Roxanna Curry, 5, is vaccinated against H1N1 in Silver Spring, Md., on Oct. 28.

BALTIMORE

H1N1 Vaccine Available To All Md. Residents Now

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene says the swine flu vaccine is now available to all Maryland residents. The vaccine was available at county health departments as of Tuesday and will be shipped to pharmacies. The availability comes as the department says flu activity is declining from a peak in October. **(AP)**

WOODBRIDGE, VA.

Man at NVCC Arrested With High-Powered Rifle

A man with a high-powered rifle on the Prince William campus of Northern Virginia Community College caused the college to shut down Tuesday afternoon. But the man, who police believe was a student at the school, was arrested and no one was reported hurt. **(TWP)**

RICHMOND, VA.

Va. Tech Faces $43M Suit

The family of a Virginia Tech student has filed a $43 million lawsuit, accusing the university of negligence in its response to a warning that their son was suicidal. Daniel Kim committed suicide on Dec. 9, 2007, a month after the university's counseling center closed its review, according to the lawsuit in Fairfax County Circuit Court by Kim's parents. **(AP)**

WASHINGTON

Ex-Times Editor Files Suit

Former Washington Times opinion editor Richard Miniter is suing the paper for breach of contract, emotional distress and damage to his reputation. Miniter says he was harassed over his refusal to sign a fraudulent document to help an executive. **(AP)**

Handgun Recovered at D.C. Jail

Officials say firearm may be linked to '03 inmate lawsuit plot

Washington

Authorities recovered a handgun in the D.C. jail that may have been in the facility since at least 2003, officials said Tuesday.

The gun was recovered Monday night "in a channel within a component of the inmate telephone units" during a shakedown, D.C. jail officials said.

The weapon may be linked to another handgun smuggled into the facility that was part of a 2003 scheme in which four inmates agreed to shoot themselves in hopes of suing the District and winning a monetary judgment for not keeping them safe, officials said.

The four inmates were wounded on Dec. 23, 2003, inside the jail's maximum security wing. The inmates suffered minor injuries. Two were convicted and two others pleaded guilty to charges stemming from the plot.

LUCIAN PERKINS/TWP/FILE

Officials say the gun may be linked to a plot in which inmates shot themselves.

Since the shooting, rumors have swirled through the jail that a second gun was part of the scam and it remained hidden somewhere inside the facility, authorities said.

Sylvia Lane, a spokeswoman for the D.C. Department of Corrections, said officials have been trying to find the rumored weapon ever since. **DEL QUENTIN WILBER (THE WASHINGTON POST)**

washingtonpost.com

MITCHELL LAYTON/NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES

A TRIBUTE TO ABE POLLIN was planned for Tuesday night at Verizon Center in the District. Pollin, the owner of the Washington Wizards who once owned the Washington Capitals, died Nov. 24 at age 85. For pictures of the event honoring the man who built Verizon Center, go to | **washingtonpost.com/local**

Va. GOP Lawmaker Calls Kaine Tax Hikes Useless

Richmond, Va.

Even with hard times assured for public schools and other state-supported ventures, Democratic Gov. Tim Kaine's bid to end tax breaks to help balance an underfunded budget will get nowhere in a Republican-run House of Delegates, the top GOP budget writer said Tuesday.

But even as Republicans, fortified by last month's elections, hold the line against new taxes, increases are virtually assured by some cash-starved local governments after support from the state dries up, an advocate for county governments said.

Delegate M. Kirkland Cox, the ranking House Appropriations Committee Republican, told journalists that rolling back tax breaks is tantamount to a tax increase, something Republican Gov.-elect Bob McDonnell has pledged to reject with the support of a Republican-controlled House.

JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

The top GOP budget writer said Kaine's bid to end tax breaks will go nowhere.

"The biggest thing he [Kaine] could do for us is not put a tax increase in the budget," Cox told about 50 reporters and editors attending the eighth annual Associated Press Day at the Capitol.

"The reason for that is elections have consequences, and in this election, Bob McDonnell ran on a platform of not raising taxes," said Cox, from Colonial Heights. **(AP)**

The Lotteries

Tuesday, Dec. 8

Maryland

Mid-day Pick 3	6-3-0
Evening Pick 3 (Mon.)	6-7-8
Mid-day Pick 4	9-6-1-2
Evening Pick 4 (Mon.)	7-8-6-2
Match 5 (Mon.)	3-9-16-18-20 (30)

District

Mid-day Lucky Numbers	5-2-8
Evening Lucky Numbers (Mon.)	3-7-1
Mid-day DC 4	2-3-2-7
Evening DC 4 (Mon.)	0-2-2-1
Mid-day D.C. Five	4-0-2-4-9
Evening D.C. Five (Mon.)	2-1-0-9-9
Daily 6 (Mon.)	1-3-13-19-36-39 (11)

Virginia

Mid-day Pick 3	7-8-3
Evening Pick 3 (Mon.)	1-1-0
Mid-day Pick 4	6-6-7-2
Evening Pick 4 (Mon.)	2-8-1-3
Mid-day Cash 5 (Tues.)	2-5-10-11-26
Evening Cash 5 (Mon.)	2-15-17-21-29

All winning numbers are official only when validated at a claims location. Drawings that occur after Express' deadline will be published two days later.

D.C. Moves Up in Math

Improved scores spur hopes that the city's schools are finally getting it right

Washington

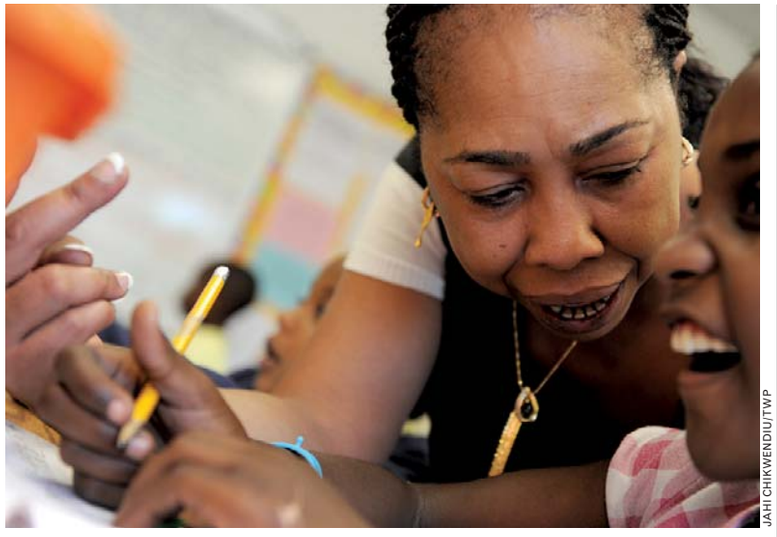
D.C. public schools scored outsized gains in mathematics over the past six years under a federal report card released Tuesday showing that a city long derided for having one of the nation's worst school systems has been progressing faster than its urban peers.

The advances do not put the city schools in anywhere near the same league as the Washington area's high-flying suburban systems. But the results show that reform efforts under D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle A. Rhee and her predecessor have begun to pay off.

Once routinely ranked last in math, D.C. public schools are now roughly on par with such cities as Los Angeles, Baltimore and Cleveland, and they are advancing faster than most of them. The National Assessment of Educational Progress found the D.C. system was the only one of 11 studied in 2007 and 2009 to make significant strides in grades four and eight math scores. Its gains in fourth grade since 2003 were triple those found in the nation as a whole and roughly double the advances for all large cities.

There were many caveats. The report covered only math, and a crucial follow-up on reading is expected next year. The D.C. system's scores also remain well below the national average: 220 this year on a 500-point scale in fourth grade, compared to 239 nationally; and 251 in eighth grade, compared to 282 nationally.

D.C.'s independently operated charter schools also made progress over six years. Their fourth-grade score rose to 217 in 2009 from 203 in 2003. The eighth-grade D.C. charter score this year, 256, beat the D.C. system score of 251.



JAHI CHIKWENDIU/TWP

Teacher Kahliquah Dawkins works with a student at Tyler Elementary School in Washington.

Still, experts said the scores provide evidence that the D.C. system under Rhee is gaining traction.

"Gains of this magnitude do not happen by accident," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. "They happen because there are real reforms beneath them."

Despite the focus on Rhee, the report showed that the upward trend in the District began before she arrived. She credited her predecessor, Clifford Janey, for laying a solid foundation.

In math, educators say, an increased focus on the use of games, calculators and written responses helped drive the gains in scores under the national assessment, known as NAEP. The strategy dates back to Janey's tenure but has been redoubled under Rhee.

"I know it sounds simplistic, but it's through the games that kids were able to reinforce factual recall and apply the skills. They were able to look at math as something that was not just paper and pencil drills," said one elementary school instructional coach who asked not to be named.

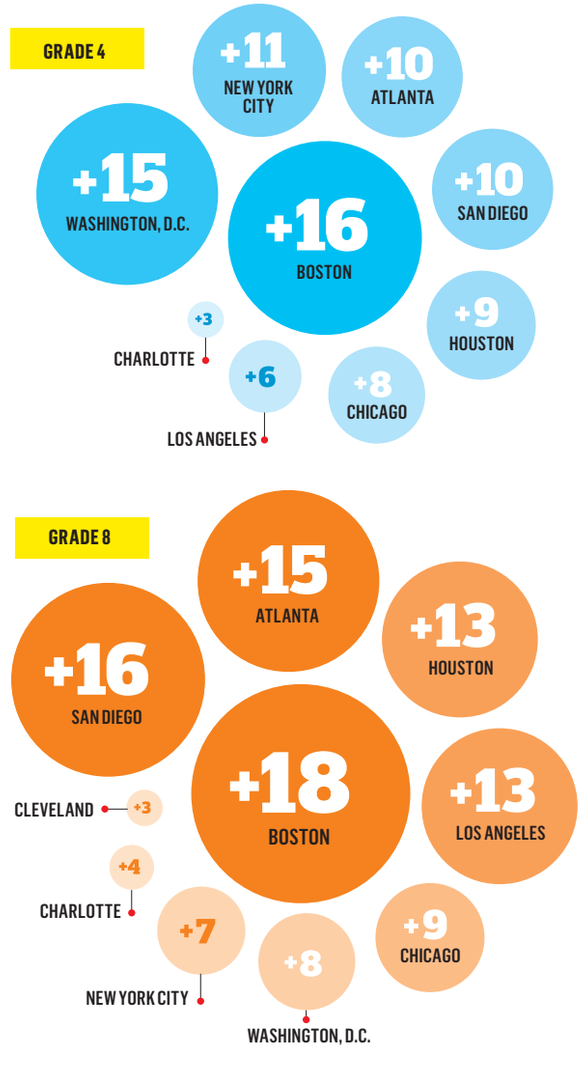
Teachers and administrators say the improvement in scores is also attributable in part to Everyday Mathematics, a K-6 curriculum Janey brought to the District in 2005.

The NAEP exams are a competition of sorts for urban school reformers. With D.C. Public Schools beginning to rise in the rankings, Detroit now sticks out as the school system with by far the lowest scores.

Rhee on Tuesday told a Detroit civic leader: "I feel your pain. We were where you are not too long ago." NICK ANDERSON AND BILL TURQUE (THE WASHINGTON POST)

How D.C. Stacks Up

The National Assessment of Educational Progress regularly evaluates student achievement in the U.S., issuing data on school performance that is informally known as "the nation's report card." The graphic below compares the gains in average math scores among students in major urban areas since 2003 on an NAEP exam.



"WE GREW SIGNIFICANTLY [ON SCORES], WHEREAS OTHER DISTRICTS REMAINED PRETTY FLAT. THAT, FOR US, SPEAKS PRETTY LOUDLY."

D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee, touting the District's gains in math test scores during a press conference Tuesday. Rhee took office in 2007 with a mandate from Mayor Adrian M. Fenty to overhaul the schools from the ground up. Her combative style, especially in challenging the teachers union, has made her tenure controversial.

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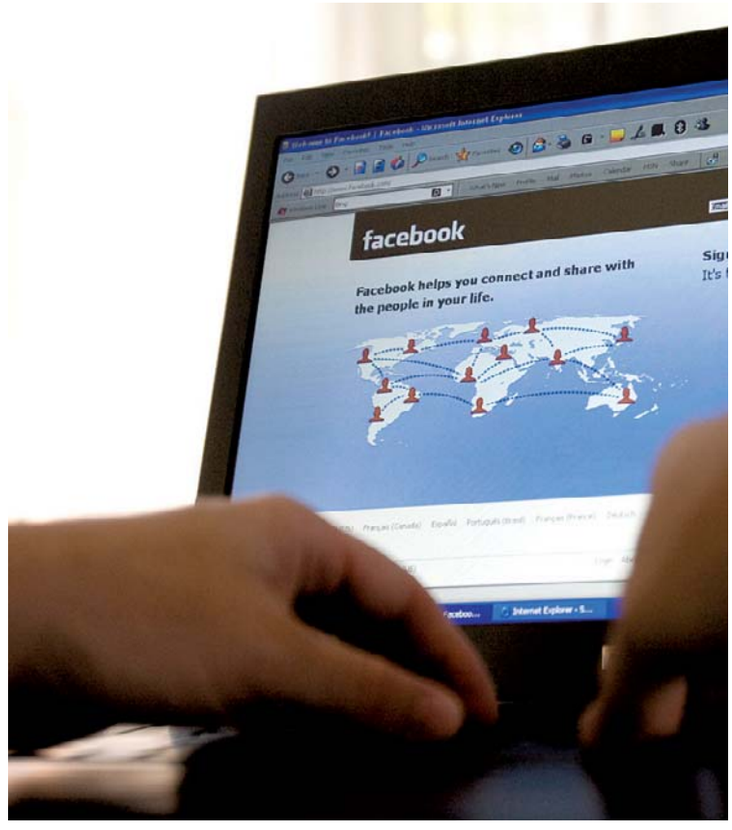
The Feed

MUST-SEE ITEMS FROM AROUND THE WEB



Failure Of the Buddy System

1 Feeling lonely? Maybe you have too darn many friends. By creating the illusion of a tight-knit circle of many pals, Facebook and its virtual ilk have cheapened and delegitimized the concept of true friendship, says William Deresiewicz in a thought-provoking Chronicle Review essay published earlier this week. It's not all social networking's fault, though — the classic model of the devoted soulmate also fell victim to capitalism and modernity.

Wisdom of Youth

2 What's it like to have never "partied like it's 1999"? A group of California fourth-graders — all of whom were born in 2000 — shared their perspectives on life and the last decade with Yahoo! News editor Allison Louie-Garcia, in an amusing video posted online Tuesday. The interviews shed light on what 9-year-olds think about terrorism, President Obama and the mystifying concept of dial-up Internet access.

Find these links and more at expressnightout.com/thefeed

Not Exactly a Clean Slate

3 It sounded promising at the time. For months, TechCrunch founder Michael Arrington told fans of his blog about the CrunchPad, a Web-browsing tablet he was creating. But recently, Arrington's deal with developer Fusion Garage went sour. As Fusion Garage launches the tablet — renamed the JooJoo — PC World on Tuesday predicted its failure. Its top reason: "No free publicity from TechCrunch."

Paper: Don't Write Me Off Yet

4 Paper could soon power the same high-tech devices that are being blamed for killing the printed word, scientists said this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Researchers turned plain loose-leaf paper into a battery by dipping it in special ink, Greenbang.com reported Tuesday. Yi Cui, a Stanford professor involved in the research, foresees clever uses for the technology — which might even double as wallpaper.

Feed Back: Got something Feed-worthy? Reach us on Twitter @expressfeed

Sports

RICHARD WOLOWICZ/GETTY IMAGES

The Washington Capitals have a lot of reasons to celebrate this season. Despite battling a slew of injuries, they are the owners of the NHL's best record through 30 games.

Caps at the Top of Their Game

7PM | CSN
Wednesday

Pro Hockey

They've had to play more games than ever before without their star player, Alex Ovechkin. Their coach hasn't yet named a starting goaltender. And they've had to navigate through an usually high number of injuries — 11 different players from the opening roster have missed action due to various ailments.

Yet through Monday night's action, the Washington Capitals are off to the fastest start in franchise history and sit atop the NHL standings 30 games into the 2009-10 season. They visit the Buffalo Sabres on Wednesday night

The numbers behind the team's 19-5-6 record, though, are even more impressive than at first glance. With Monday night's 3-0 victory over Tampa Bay, the Capitals are now 7-0-0 against Southeast Division opponents and hold an 11-point lead over second-place Atlanta, the biggest margin in the entire NHL.

"It's not really significant at this point of the season," coach Bruce Boudreau told reporters Monday night. "It's a marker that you're playing well, but it's way more significant after 82 games."

But while Boudreau sticks to the coach speak, the Capitals have been busy rediscovering their killer instinct. Though they've held a lead in all but one game this season, recently Washington has shown signs of becoming a team that puts opponents away before they know what hit them.

17
The number of Capitals players who have scored a point so far this season.

Last week, the Caps cruised to a 6-2 victory over Florida after jumping out to a 6-0 lead, and last Saturday night, they manhandled rival Philadelphia, 8-2. They currently sport a six-game winning streak in which they've outscored the opposition 26-9.

It helps that they're getting production from up and down the lineup. In the eight games Ovechkin has missed this season, 17 Capitals have registered a point and the Great 8 doesn't even hold the team lead in points anywhere. That belongs to center Nicklas Backstrom, one of eight Capitals with at least 15 points this season.

"It's 30 games in, but we want to be [at the top]," said Ovechkin of the team's historic start. "If you're there, you have to continue the way you're playing." MARK GIANNOTTO

CAPS' BEST STARTS: This is the second time the Caps own the NHL's best record this late in the season.

1984-85	1985-86	1991-92	1997-98	2008-09	2009-10
15-9-6	19-7-4	21-9-0	15-11-5	17-10-3	19-5-6
FINISHED 46-25-9	FINISHED 50-23-7	FINISHED 45-27-8	FINISHED 40-30-12	FINISHED 50-24-8	FINISH TBD

LUCKY

Texas quarterback Colt McCoy didn't realize the football must hit something before the clock stops when he tossed away a pass at the end of the Longhorns' 13-12 victory against Nebraska — a gaffe that nearly left his team with no time to kick the game-winning field goal. After McCoy floated a pass out of bounds, the clock hit :00. But one second was put back on after officials looked at a replay, enough time for Texas to kick the winning field goal. (AP)

Gatorade Drops Tiger Beverage

Golf

Gatorade confirmed Tuesday it is discontinuing its Tiger Woods drink but says it made the decision before the golfer's car accident led to a media firestorm surrounding his personal life.

The decision to drop the drink, called Tiger Focus, was first reported by trade publication Beverage Digest in an issue dated Nov. 25, two days before the incident at Woods' home in Florida. The publication's editor, John Sicher, said he learned of the decision the week of Nov. 9.

The brand — a unit of PepsiCo Inc. — said the decision does not have to do with recent events. A spokesman says the decision came several months ago.

Sales volume of Tiger Focus was down 34 percent this year through October. (AP)

Real Progresses

LIONEL CIRONNEAU/AP

REAL MADRID'S CRISTIANO RONALDO, left, is mobbed by teammates after his second goal of Tuesday's match against Marseille. Real Madrid won 3-1 to advance to the knockout stage of the Champions League.

Sports

Nationals Ante Up for Big Name

Washington lands Rodriguez with a two-year, $6M deal

Pro Baseball

The Washington Nationals' front office knows it must pay a premium to lure the players it wants. At the winter meetings, the club is proving it's willing to do just that.

Washington's bid to add a backup catcher this off-season came to a quick end Monday night with the acquisition of free agent Ivan Rodriguez, a future Hall of Famer whose stature and salary suggests a significant role, according to a team source.

Rodriguez, 38, who signed a two-year, $6 million deal, will fill a major need for the Nationals, backing up catcher Jesus Flores, who is recovering from a serious right shoulder injury.

If Flores is not ready for the regular season, Rodriguez will be able to play regularly.

Rodriguez spent last season with the Houston Astros and Texas Rangers, hitting .249 with 10 home runs in 425 at-bats. During his prime, he was known as an extraordinary defensive catcher who also had the ability to hit with pop.

Those skills are diminished now, but Rodriguez nonetheless represents a high-profile signing; he's a former AL Most Valuable Player, and an upgrade over Wil Nieves and Josh Bard, who shared the catching duties last season.

GREGORY SHAMUS/GETTY IMAGES

Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez split time catching in Detroit and Houston last season.

A Questionable Signing?

Former Nationals general manager Jim Bowden was among the first to criticize the Ivan Rodriguez signing. "Following in the footsteps of Paul LoDuca and Dmitri Young, another bad [signing] by the Nationals," Bowden said on SIRIUS XM Radio's MLB Home Plate channel. "This time by a new GM, at least," he said. "Let's give a lot of credit where credit is due. Scott Boras, his agent, was able to get a two-year guaranteed contract for a 38-year old catcher with an on-base percentage of .280." (TWP)

The signing raised eyebrows in Indianapolis, where the winter meetings are held, but the Nationals decided they wanted this particular player, and, clearly, the second guaranteed year was what got the deal done.

A baseball source told The Washington Post that the Kansas City Royals, another team interested in the catcher, were discussing a one-year deal between $800,000 and $1 million. The contract, like the one Rodriguez had last year, would have been heavily laden with performance incentives.

The free agent market was flooded with respectable second-tier catchers, but the Nationals believed Rodriguez was best suited to handle everyday duties, if necessary.

Former major league manager Jack McKeon, who led the Florida Marlins to a World Series title with Rodriguez in 2003, called the player known as "Pudge" one of his favorite players of all time.

"What a leader he was," McKeon told The Post on Tuesday. "He not only leads by example, but he was really positive with the Latin players. He's a guy that took charge."

McKeon explained Rodriguez's value in relation to the young pitchers he can potentially help.

Speaking about the Nationals, McKeon said, "You're probably going to get a half a year quicker development from those young guys, and that's where he'll really pay off. That's where you'll really like him." (EXPRESS/THE WASHINGTON POST)

In Brief

PRO BASEBALL

Yankees Nearing a Deal For Tigers' Granderson

The Yankees, Tigers and Diamondbacks neared an agreement Tuesday on a three-team trade that would send All-Star center fielder Curtis Granderson from Detroit to New York, a person familiar with the negotiations said. The World Series champion Yankees would trade right-hander Ian Kennedy to Arizona, and lefty reliever Phil Coke and outfield prospect Austin Jackson to Detroit. (AP)

TELEVISION

Gammons Exiting ESPN

Peter Gammons is leaving ESPN after the winter meetings to join MLB Network. Gammons' departure from ESPN was announced Tuesday, and MLB Network may announce his hiring as early as Wednesday, a baseball official said. (AP)

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

BCS a Holiday for 'Bama

Alabama students and faculty won't have to worry about missing class to attend the BCS national title football game on Jan. 7. The university canceled classes Jan. 6-8. (AP)

TV Lineup

CAPITALS (7 P.M., CSN) The red-hot Capitals stay on the road with a game against the Buffalo Sabres.

COLLEGE HOOPS (9:30 P.M., ESPN) Two potential powerhouses square off when Connecticut and Kentucky take the court in New York.

MORE COLLEGE HOOPS (7 P.M. AND 9 P.M., ESPN2) Georgia visits St. John's, and Big 5 rivals Villanova and Saint Joseph's duke it out.

PRO HOOPS (7 P.M., ESPN) The Atlanta Hawks hope to replicate last year's sweep of the Chicago Bulls in the teams' first matchup this season.

PRO HOCKEY (9 P.M., VERSUS) The first-place Colorado Avalanche hosts the Minnesota Wild in a Northwest Division matchup.

MASCOTS

William & Mary is down to five finalists for its new mascot: griffin, king and queen, phoenix, pug and wren. The Tribe is replacing its feathered logo after it was ruled offensive to American Indians. Offer feedback on the choices at www.wm.edu/mascots. (AP)

1. Griffin

2. King and Queen

3. Phoenix

4. Pug

5. Wren

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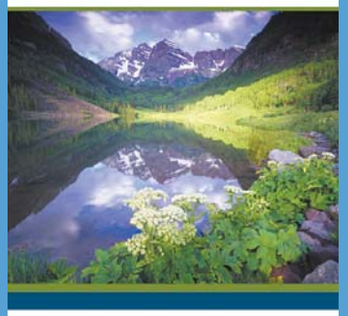

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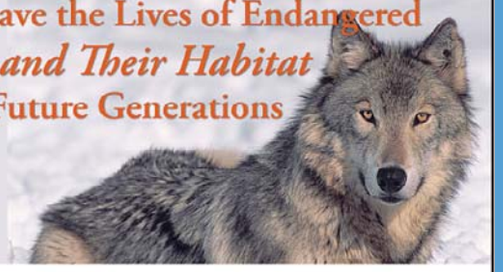

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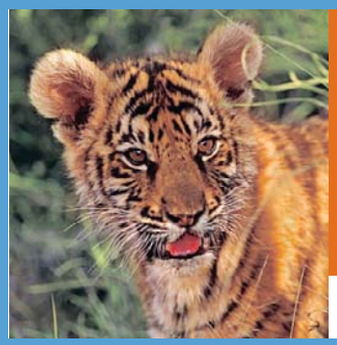

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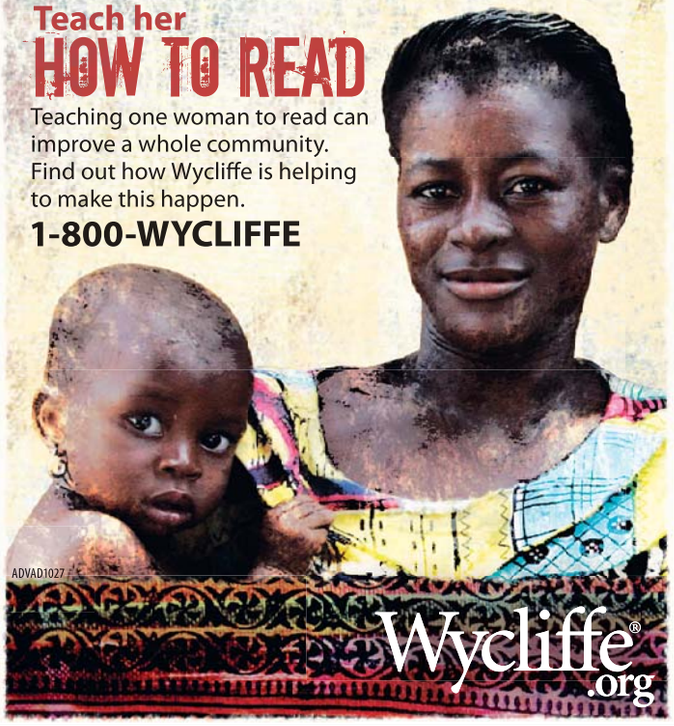

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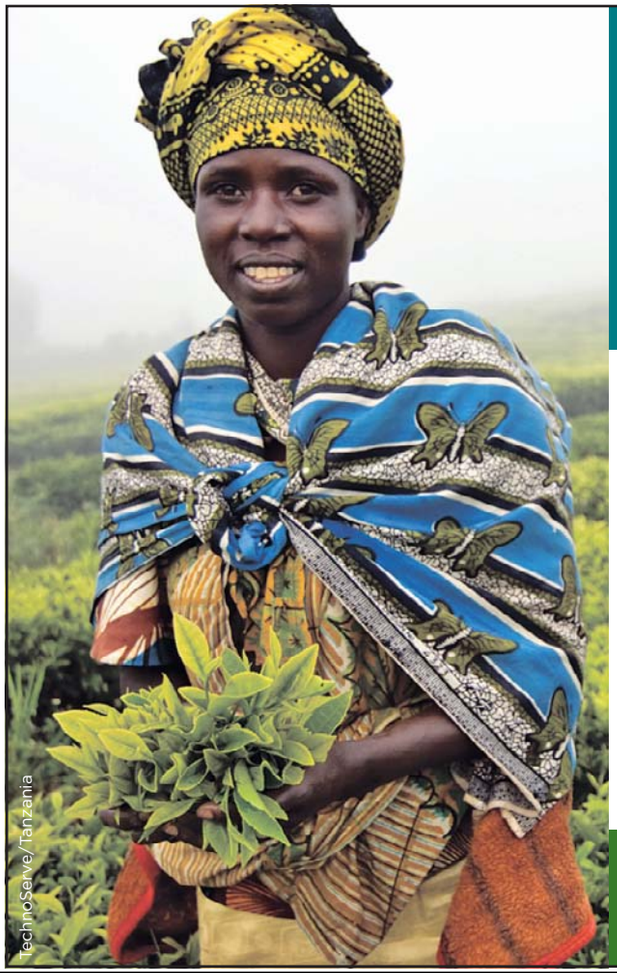

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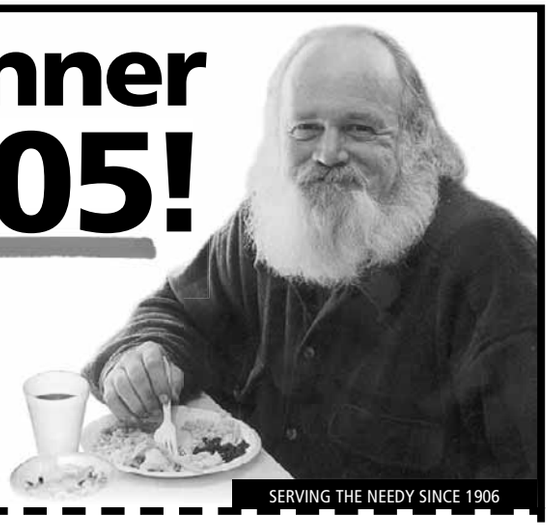

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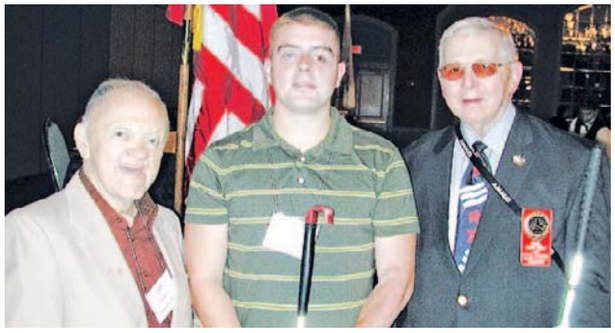

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Sports

Redskins Give Suisham the Boot

Washington brings in new kicker after Sunday's vital miss

Pro Football

Two days after place kicker Shaun Suisham's missed chip-shot field goal contributed to an overtime loss to the New Orleans Saints, the Redskins Tuesday waived the five-year veteran and signed Graham Gano after kicking tryouts at Redskins Park.

Gano won the Lou Groza Award at Florida State and kicked most recently for Las Vegas of the UFL. After the UFL season ended, he tried out last week for the New York Giants.

Owner Daniel Snyder and Vinny Cerrato, Washington's executive vice president of football operations, decided to make a change at the position after Suisham — in his third full season in the role for the Redskins — pushed what could have been a game-deciding field goal wide right.

NICK WASS/AP

Shaun Suisham missed three field goals all year, but Sunday's shank cost him his job.

"We played for that field goal," Redskins coach Jim Zorn said in an interview on ESPN980. "And we were all assured, and I believe Shaun was assured, that, you know, that ball was gonna go through with that 23-yard field goal. And yet it didn't. It does affect all of us."

After Sunday's game, Suisham — whose only other missed field goals came in a 7-6 loss to Dallas — fought back tears while shouldering responsibility for the loss. Many players publicly supported Suisham, but some of his teammates were critical.

Said defensive tackle Albert Haynesworth: "We've all got to do our job. I can't really say anything. We've got to do what we're here to do." **JASON REID AND RICK MAESE (THE WASHINGTON POST)**

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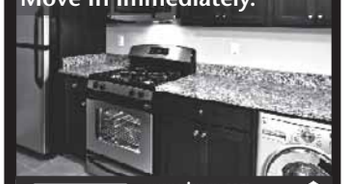

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lookout

Dearly Unbeloved
Uma Thurman calls off her engagement to Arpad Busson 39

Off the Cuffs

MTV

The Reveal World

It'd be easy to dismiss MTV's new "Jersey Shore" (Thu., 10 p.m.) as just another reality train wreck. Sure, the entertaining glimpse into the lives of eight deeply tanned, work-averse self-described "guidos" and "guidettes" sharing a summer beach house is full of jaw-dropping antics (10 seconds in and it's clear why Italian-American groups opposed the show's debut). But the result is actually a fascinating anthropological look at the grooming rituals and customary attire of a small subculture of American society. Think PBS documentary, but instead of tribal tattoos and ethnic jewelry, there are gold chains, heavy cologne and shockingly skimpy outfits.

By Betsy Lowther

We're hardly condoning cut-to-the-belly-button tops or thickly gelled coifs. But we appreciate the reminder that — despite our own preferences — all the world does not want to fall into the Gap. And who knows? We might even pick up some sartorial lessons, too. Such as: "[At least] wear a thong bikini," scolds housemate Angelina after roomie Nicole climbs into the hot tub in her leopard underwear. "That's a little bit more classier." Now those are words to live by. Or, at the least, be very, very amused by.

@ Comments? Give Betsy your feedback: **expressnightout.com/offthecuffs**

That's Some Comeback

Chris Brown offers up apologies and creepy seduction on his latest, 'Graffiti'

CD Review

How do you recover from the career-ruining move of beating up your famous girlfriend and then having the whole world find out about it?

For Chris Brown, the answer is putting together a partly apologetic, partly aggressively sexual album that should give any listener with half a brain the heebie-jeebies.

On "Graffiti," Brown throws together 13 carefully calculated tracks that either reiterate his numerous apologies to former girlfriend Rihanna, who he assaulted back in February, or proclaim his need for a new woman in his life, one who will let him help her "bloom like a flower, babe."

Creepy, no?

Much of the album is like that, veering between regret (in the form of ballads such as "Crawl" and "So Cold") and an almost offensive lustiness (in songs such as "Sing Like Me" and "Take My Time.")

The opener and first single, "I Can Transform Ya," is by far the album's catchiest, and the one that's most reminiscent of old Chris Brown. But then come tracks such as "Sing Like Me," a slower ballad that describes how Brown's not looking for a wife but just girls he can take home, and "Take My Time," in which Brown commands a girl getting out of his shower to lie down naked on his bed so he can stare at her (complete with really uncomfortable, pornography-like sex noises and dialogue).

On "Fallin' Down," Brown asks, "Why is it so easy for you to blame?/I'm only human, we're all the same." That may be true, but "Graffiti" isn't a strong return — it's just one sloppy pity party.

ROXANA HADADI

GETTY IMAGES

This dance machine misses in a serious way on his latest — instead of a straight "I'm sorry" album, Brown tries to make it sexy.

Cover Your Eyes

The only thing more ridiculous than the content of Chris Brown's new album is the outrageous cover art. First, you'll notice the painful resemblance to Adam Lambert's debut album cover — both artists chose to go with that shimmery, dark, Bowie-in-"Labyrinth"/Bowie as Ziggy Stardust look and feel. Then there's the guitar nonchalantly placed over young Brown's shoulder. Does Chris Brown play the guitar? We think not. And, finally, we suppose the bionic left hand, the high-waisted pants and the Kanye glasses can be overlooked, but we cannot and will not let slide the menagerie of cartoon weirdness occurring in the bottom corner. If this is an "in-crowd" thing, then we're wholly out of it. (EXPRESS)

expressnightout

To hear snippets of Chris Brown's new songs, visit **expressnightout.com**

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expressnightout.com ▸▸ D.C.-based Animal Collective co-founder Brian Weitz on the group's free-floating new EP, 'Fall Be Kind' ▸▸ Twist your brain into a fiction-sated pretzel with the fifth season of 'Lost' on DVD ▸▸ On 'Til the Casket Drops,' hip-hop duo Clipse balances materialism with a youth-aimed message

lookout expressnightout.com

Compiled by Fiona Zublin and Sarah Mimms. For more upcoming events, visit our Top Stops blog at expressnightout.com/topstops.

top stops

1 Design for Lecturing

You may remember **NICK VERREOS** as perhaps the most unfairly eliminated contestant on "Project Runway." But Verreos has been able to parlay his obvious talent into a career as a designer and an instructor at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. He'll be speaking about the future of the industry and showing off the work of FIDM students. F.Z. ***Corcoran Gallery of Art, 500 17th St. NW; 7 p.m., $20; 202-639-1700, Corcoran.org. (Farragut West)***

2 Voices of America

Once upon a time, there was a Great Depression during which the U.S. government supported struggling writers through employment programs. Hint, hint. It was the Federal Writers' Project, and it's captured in the documentary "**SOUL OF A PEOPLE**," showing tonight. F.Z. ***Smithsonian American Art Museum, 8th and F streets NW; 7 p.m., free; 202-633-1000, Americanart.si.edu. (Gallery Place)***

3 The Music Man

BRENDAN BENSON loves making music, and he doesn't seem to mind much which instrument he's holding or who he's playing with. The man plays the keyboard, bass, drums and guitar; he sings; he writes. Now, he's on a solo tour that's stopping at the 9:30 Club tonight. The chance to see Benson live is more than worth the $15. S.M. ***9:30 Club, 815 V St. NW; 7 p.m., $15; 202-265-0930, 930.com. (U St.-Cardozo)***

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Love and Basketball

The wives of NBA players open up about living the good life and their anxieties

Television

A VH1 reality series that promises an inside look at the lives of NBA players' wives and girlfriends is set to air early next year.

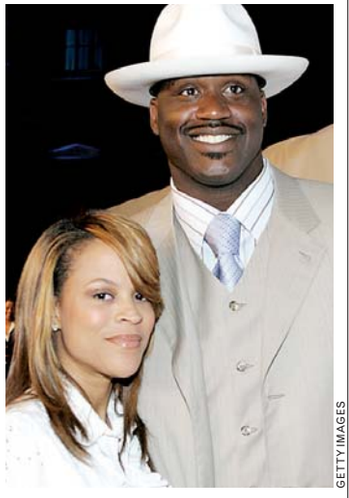
VHI said Monday that "Basketball Wives" will show the upside of the women's lives — big homes, designer clothes and jewelry — and the drawbacks, including worries about whether their husbands are being faithful on roadtrips.

Shaquille O'Neal's wife, Shaunie, will be featured and is an executive producer. Last month, she filed for legal separation with intent to divorce, citing irreconcilable differences.

Others taking part are Eric Williams' wife, Jennifer; and Mesha O'Neal, married to Jermaine O'Neal.

Royce Reed, who has a 2-year-old son with Dwight Howard of the Orlando Magic, also will be part of the series, according to a news release from VH1.

But Howard's name isn't mentioned in the release, and VH1 spokesman Scott Acord declined to say why, adding, "You'll have to watch the show to find out."



GETTY IMAGES

Show producer Shaunie O'Neal has filed for separation from her husband, Shaq.

'Basketball Wives' will show the upsides and the drawbacks, including worries about infidelity.

VHI executive Jeff Olde, in announcing the series, noted the public's fascination with the wives of star athletes.

An obvious example is Tiger Woods' wife, who is in the spotlight due to Woods' his recent car accident and his alleged extramarital affairs.

"Basketball Wives" debuts March 15. **(AP)**

TV Beat

Merry, Scary

Kristin Wiig's recurring character Gilly might not seemed filled with holiday cheer. But nonetheless, "SNL Presents: A Very Gilly Christmas" will air Dec. 17 at 8 p.m. The two-hour special, the first for "SNL" since 2002, will be led by Wiig's Gilly, an Annie look-alike who delights in violent mischief. The special will feature new sketches with Gilly and highlights of classic holiday "SNL" bits. **(AP)**

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If you (or someone you know) have been diagnosed with major depression, you may be able to participate in a National Institute of Mental Health research study investigating a novel medication. This treatment study is studying if a research medication can produce a rapid reduction of depressive symptoms in patients with treatment-resistant major depressive disorder.

This 7-week inpatient study is conducted at the NIH Clinical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and compares the medication to a placebo (inactive sugar pill). After completion of the study the participant will receive short-term treatment to transition back to the community. In addition, all research participation is without cost.

Those eligible to participate must:
- Be ages 18-65
- Have been diagnosed with major depression
- Have taken two antidepressants that did not help

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lookout entertainment

Outer Strength

Mary J. Blige is 20 years in and getting better all the time

Artists

Since breaking through with her first R&B-charting single and first No. 1 in 1992, "You Remind Me," no one has touched fans' inner emotions quite like Mary J. Blige.

Nearly 20 years later, that emotional connection shows no signs of fraying. The nine-time Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter returns Dec. 21 with her ninth studio album, "Stronger" (Matriach/Geffen/Interscope).

What was your mind-set when working on "Stronger"?

I always say that whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger. No matter how successful you become, you always end up finding out there's something in you that needs to be purged. You hit a valley, another trial. It hurts so bad that you have to go through something like this again.

How would you describe your evolution as a singer/songwriter from 1992 until now?

I gain more wisdom all the time and from every place I go. There's really no difference. It's just me continuing to grow.

MARKUS KLINKO & INDRANI

Mary J. Blige's album "Stronger" will be available for purchase on Dec. 21.

Speaking of which, fans may be surprised that you're one of the guests on classical artist Andrea Bocelli's holiday album. How did that come about?

He requested me [laughs]. I knew his voice was amazing, so I said, "Yes, absolutely."

After almost 20 years, what continues to drive you?

Honestly, it goes back to my fans. I have a responsibility to them, and they let me know that it's a responsibility. I read things all the time from them like, "Please keep doing what you doing." Or "I'm listening to 'Growing Pains' right now, and it's getting me through my day." It's just the things people say that connect me with their lives ... that keeps me going. GAIL MITCHELL (BILLBOARD)

Mixed Media

Love Potion Brewing

'Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince' ($9.99-$19.99)

It's hard to blame the filmmakers for focusing on the love story here. After all, the sixth book in the Harry Potter series is awfully light on adventure. With its romantic triangle and its gorgeous production design, this might be the most enjoyable "Harry Potter" movie yet for people who don't particularly care about "Potter" movies. **Notable Extra:** The two-disc version gives a sneak peak at the "Wizarding World of Harry Potter" theme park opening at Universal Studios next year. **If You Like:** Angsty teens, Quidditch. **If You Don't Like:** Reality. (THE WASHINGTON POST/EXPRESS)

TV tonight lookout

People of Controversy

Barbara Walters profiles a who's who of incendiary stars

Roundup

ABC 10:00 We try to avoid using words such as "fascinating," because when you really try to put your rhetorical finger on the term, it quivers like a bowlful of jelly. Seriously, who gets to define "fascinating"? One person's "fascinating" is another person's overrated, overexposed or, in the case of talk shows, overbooked.

This less-than-fascinating rumination on "fascinating" is a windy prelude to the annual "Barbara Walters Special: 10 Most Fascinating People of 2009." For years now, Walters' roundup of the fascinating seemed limited to blandly famous personalities such as Tom Cruise or Will Smith flogging their latest blockbuster.

ABC

Sarah Palin is one of Barbara Walters' "Fascinating People." And their outfits match!

In contrast, almost every member of this year's panel could be considered a lightening rod for controversy, and several play the victim all the way to the bank.

The list — including Adam Lambert, Lady Gaga, Tyler Perry, Kate Gosselin, Brett Favre, Sarah Palin and Glenn Beck — almost all fall into the love-'em-or-hate-'em category. In a furiously competitive entertainment environment, it has become fatal to arouse indifference. None of these "fascinating" figures can be accused of that. **KEVIN MCDONOUGH (UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE)**

Best Bets

CW 9:00

The Victoria's Secret Fashion Show Alessandra Ambrosio, Miranda Kerr, Doutzen Kroes and Marisa Miller are among the lingerie models starring in this annual holiday-themed runway show in New York City. The special includes performances by the Black Eyed Peas.

NBC 9:00 **Law & Order: Special Victims Unit** After the deaths of three children, Fin reaches out to the Center of Immigrant Services, which has been inundated with hate mail.

BRAVO 10:00 **Top Chef: Las Vegas** After jumping through a series of daunting culinary hoops in Sin City, the top three "cheftestant" finalists reassemble for what would seem to be their easiest assignment yet.

A&E 10:00 **Steven Seagal Lawman** Deputy Chief Seagal and his team call in a K-9 unit to search for a burglary suspect. The star later apprehends a man who broke into a house while fleeing from police.

HISTORY 10:00 **MysteryQuest** You may find yourself looking over your shoulder during "Return of the Amityville Horror," a creepy episode that revisits what may be history's most famous haunting. **(TRIBUNE MEDIA)**

'Tis the Season

Holiday Mash-Up

And you thought it was disconcerting to see Christmas decorations in the stores at Halloween! Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas," at 8 p.m. on the Disney Channel, takes the overlapping holiday scenario to the extreme. The Pumpkin King (Jack Skellington), ruler of Halloween Town, hatches a plan to kidnap Santa Claus and put his own ghostly spin on the yuletide season, much to the chagrin of his love interest, Sally. Danny Elfman, Chris Sarandon and Catherine O'Hara supply the voices. **(TRIBUNE MEDIA)**

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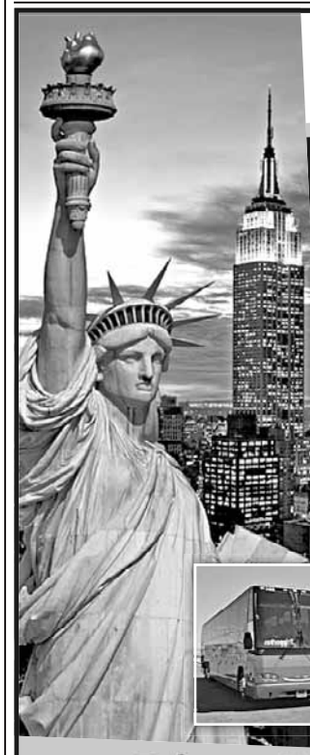

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Adventures in the Everglades

A tiny Florida town draws visitors with nature tours by boat

Destinations

Jesse Kennon's day begins at 6:30 a.m., as he opens up Coopertown's only bait and tackle shop. He heads to the only restaurant, where the lunch menu includes alligator tail and frog legs, to make sure the kitchen is ready. He is then off to spend the day giving airboat rides through the Florida Everglades.

Kennon, or "Mayor" as they call him here, runs Coopertown, which is less than an hour from Miami but consists of only four acres and eight residents — his immediate family. Still, this town that started in 1945 when Kennon's family first offered airboat tours has turned into a major player in South Florida tourism, attracting about 50,000 visitors per year. That does not include the dozens of music videos and model shoots done here, or the major television and movie productions filmed on site, such as episodes for "CSI: Miami."

Yet it's still a small town. In the 1940s, there was nothing out there but the Everglades and the Indian village. The restaurant and house where Kennon lives went up two years later. Today, there is only one major road connecting Coopertown to Miami.

"What we do here is try to show you the beauty and the majestic part of the Everglades," said Kennon, who wears gold-plated alligator jewelry on his neck and another on his ring finger.

"Most people anticipate coming to see a big jungle. When they get out there, they find it's really not a big jungle," he added.

The goal for Kennon and his staff is to explain the importance of preserving the habitat.

"The more people I can introduce and show the environment, the ecosystem, the fauna, and explain what the actual Everglades is about, that's more people that respect that and will help support its survival," he said. SUZETTE LABOY (AP)

WILFREDO LEE/AP

Tourists take an airboat tour of the Everglades in Coopertown, Fla., last month. The town attracts about 50,000 visitors per year.

Smooth Operation

The original airboat tours in Coopertown, Fla., show visitors alligators in their natural habitat. The rides are smooth, not bumpy or splashy as some would expect, almost as though you are gliding on 12 inches of water. While on the ride, you will see different species of birds and vegetation: the great egret, a tall white bird; the great blue heron with its blue and gray feathers; the white swamp lily or the spatterdock, a floating-leaved plant. (AP)

Pacific War Museum Expands Its Bush Gallery

Exhibits

The National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas, has expanded its George H.W. Bush Gallery with new multimedia exhibits, testimonials and artifacts about the conflict in Asia during World War II.

In-depth exhibits include a look at the impact and destruction of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Among the artifacts on display is an HA-19, one of five Japanese two-man submarines that took part in the attack.

The opening of the new space was timed to coincide with the 68th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack on Dec. 7. The dedication was attended by the former president for whom the gallery is named. Bush, who lives in Houston, was a World War II naval aviator who survived being shot down by the Japanese over the Pacific.

About 4,000 people attended the ceremony to mark the opening of the gallery.

The $15.5 million museum expansion had been planned for about a decade. (AP)

ERIC GAY/AP

George H.W. Bush cuts a ribbon at the Museum of the Pacific War on Monday.

686K **The approximate number of passengers** who took Amtrak trains between Nov. 24 and 30 — setting a new record for ridership during the week of Thanksgiving. The number of passengers is 4 percent higher than it was last year and bests a previous record of 666,716 riders set in 2007. Amtrak added extra trains to accommodate riders. (AP)

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DETAILS: Based on double occupancy; single supplement starts at $300. Contact Europeasap.com.

VANCOUVER PACKAGE

$705 The deal includes round-trip airfare from D.C. on American, four nights at the Metropolitan Hotel Vancouver and hotel taxes, from $545 per person — plus about $69 in taxes.

WHEN: Through Dec. 25, 2009.

DETAILS: Based on double occupancy; single supplement is $253. The $545 rate is based on a Dec. 10–14 stay; some dates will cost slightly more. Contact Aavacations.com.

SANTA FE HOTEL & SPA

$130 The Winter Wonderland package includes one night at the 219-room Eldorado Hotel and Spa in downtown Santa Fe and a complimentary 50-minute massage or facial at Nidah Spa. Treatment options, valued at $130, include the pumpkin-cranberry facial or a peppermint oil massage and are included with each night of your stay.

WHEN: Through March 31, 2010.

DETAILS: Breakfast is not included. Upgrade the spa treatment by applying a $130 credit toward the cost of any other spa service. Taxes are an additional 15 percent. Based on single or double occupancy. Refer to the Winter Wonderland special and the promo code PKGWW at the time of booking. Contact Eldoradohotel.com.

From Budget Travel Magazine

FIND MORE DEALS & TRIP-PLANNING TIPS AT BUDGETTRAVELONLINE.COM.

Feast on Earth

In a fantasy Christmas, Santa would stuff our stocking with a plane ticket to Europe. (The reality: We're shelling out for a Greyhound trip to suburbia.) But even those stuck stateside can lay out a virtual European tour of traditional holiday treats, from a French chocolate yule log to Danish holiday ale. And, after a few mugs of Austrian-style mulled wine, the local strip mall starts to resemble Vienna's Christkindlmarkt, anyhow. BETSY LOWTHER (EXPRESS)

Glaedelig Jul!

Do like the Danes with a bottle of the popular, potent holiday ale called **Julebryg** ($14, Whole Foods stores), a dark, malty brew infused with spices.

Joyeux Noel!

The French mark the holidays with a **Buche de Noel** yule log, a chocolate and buttercream cake that resembles forest timber. Arlington's Pastries by Randolph bakery produces the standard version, shown, but also offers yellow cakes with cappuccino or raspberry buttercream filling ($40, Pastries by Randolph, 4500 Lee Highway, Arlington; 703-243-0070).

Buon Natale!

Think of **panettone** as Italy's sweet, airy, raisin-filled answer to American fruitcake ($36, Dean & Deluca, 3276 M St. NW; 202-342-3500).

Happy Christmas!

What could make a classic chunk of English **toffee** even tastier? Smother it in thick milk chocolate and crunchy almonds ($30, Williams-sonoma.com).

Vesele Vanoce!

These crispy, thin **cookies** — a favorite in Moravia, now part of the Czech Republic — often come in flavors such as vanilla or ginger spice, but we like this peppermint-chocolate blend ($18 for 34, Williams-sonoma.com).

Frohe Weihnachten!

The round shape of a German **stollen** — a deliciously fragrant fruitcake iced with butter and powdered sugar — was originally meant to replicate a swaddled infant Jesus ($36, Zingermans.com). Pair a slice with a steaming mug of Austrian **gluhwein**, a mix of warm red wine and spices such as vanilla and cinnamon, via R.W. Knudsen Family's teabag-style mulling spices ($5 for 25 bags, select Whole Foods).

lookout online

Poll Center

Today's Question

DO YOU AGREE WITH OBAMA THAT THE U.S. CAN SPEND ITS WAY OUT OF THE RECESSION?

VOTE AT EXPRESSNIGHTOUT.COM OR TEXT A FOR YES OR B FOR NO TO 98999

Tuesday's Results

SHOULD U.S. OFFICIALS GET INVOLVED IN THE AMANDA KNOX CASE IN ITALY?

"It's funny how people want to throw the book at convicted criminals here in the States, but if an American does the same thing abroad, they are innocent and being wronged by an inferior society."

COMMENTER WAS BUF., NOW WAS.

"Absolutely. As long, that is, as we're OK with other countries' getting involved in the cases of foreign criminals who commit crimes here."

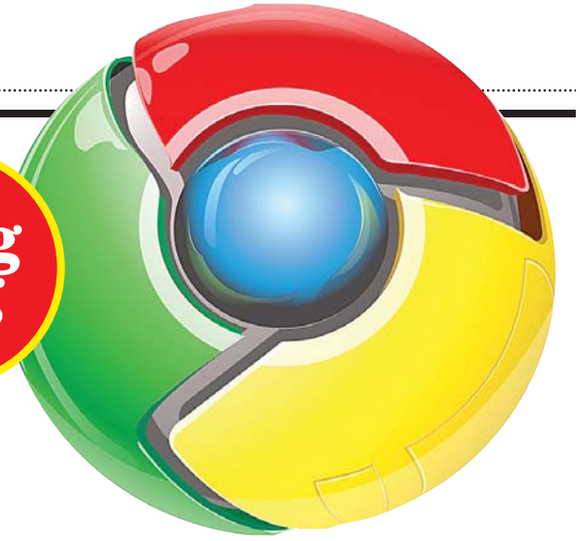
COMMENTER SPECIAL OLYMPIC BOWLER

SEE HOW YOUR METRO STATION VOTED AT WWW.EXPRESSNIGHTOUT.COM

"We can only imagine the marketing potential that having a woman like Danica Patrick in NASCAR could create."

- AUTOGUIDE.COM/AUTO-NEWS THINKS THE IRL STAR'S IMPACT ON STOCK CAR RACING WILL BE TREMENDOUS.

Blog Log



"It feels like it's been a long time coming, but it's finally here. While it's not the final version yet, the beta version is certainly much better than no Mac version at all, right?"

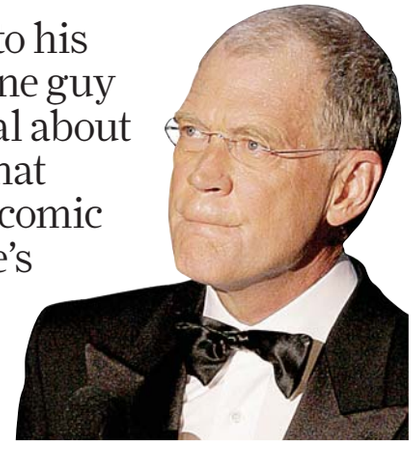
— **UBERGIZMO.COM** IS EXCITED AFTER THE RELEASE OF GOOGLE'S CHROME INTERNET BROWSER TUESDAY.

"A 33-YEAR-OLD meathead and no doubt owner of a sad, empty life. Nothing better to do on a Monday afternoon than go to the mall and throw produce at women. Way to go, tough guy."

—**JAMMIEWEARINGFOOL.BLOGSPOT.COM** THINKS JEREMY OLSON, THE MAN ACCUSED OF THROWING TOMATOES AT SARAH PALIN DURING A BOOK SIGNING IN MINNEAPOLIS, IS A TOTAL LOSER.

"With an extortion scandal to his credit, David Letterman is one guy who knows a thing or several about 'personal transgressions.' That didn't stop the bespectacled comic from poking fun at everyone's new favorite punching bag."

POPCRUNCH.COM WAS MARGINALLY SURPRISED THAT THE TALK SHOW HOST TOOK A COUPLE JABS AT TIGER WOODS DURING HIS MONDAY NIGHT SHOW.



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puzzles lookout

Horoscope

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) What works for you isn't likely to work for those near you, and vice versa. Be tolerant, and have a great day. To each his own.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) You can offer some invaluable assistance to someone who is engaged in a once-in-a-lifetime endeavor.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) You may be able to mark your return with a bold move that puts your rivals and closest competitors to shame.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Your decisions may not be groundbreaking or ground-shaking, but they'll mean a lot to you and yours when they come to fruition.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) You don't have to be doing a lot to have an influence on others and have your impact felt. Others turn to you for guidance.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) You may be hearing more than one side of a tricky story — and it'll be up to you to decide just who is telling the truth, if anyone.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Put yourself in the best array, and others are likely to take you more seriously — especially if you're doing something unlike you.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Music is likely to play an important role in your day, but you may not be hearing things as they were meant to be heard. Mysteries abound.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Look for bargains, and you will surely find them. But do you want to spend simply for the sake of spending? What do you really need?

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You're likely to have a big disagreement with a loved one, but in the end you're both after the same things. No apologies will be required.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) You are moving down a path that may not be fully understood by someone close to you. Expect to hear questions and criticism.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) You'll spend much of the day waiting out someone who is being unusually stubborn. Ultimately, you can win the stubborn prize.

PostPoints DAILY CODE L K

Scrabble Grams

PAR SCORE 150-160, BEST SCORE 209

								RACK 1
A1	E1	E1	D2	M3	R1	P3	1st Letter Triple	
								RACK 2
A1	E1	E1	O1	D2	G2	T1		
								RACK 3
A1	A1	E1	L1	T1	P3	P3	Double Word Score	
								RACK 4
A1	U1	S1	R1	L1	M3	C3		

Yesterday's Solution

V4	O1	L1	C3	A1	N1	O1	RACK 1 =	65
S1	A1	N1	D2	H4	O1	G2	RACK 2 =	62
O1	C3	T1	A1	N1	T1		RACK 3 =	8
C3	O1	W4	H4	A1	N1	D2	RACK 4 =	98
PAR SCORE 145-155							TOTAL	233

FOUR RACK TOTAL

Make a 2-7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get a 50-point bonus. Blank tiles used as any letter have no point value. Scrabble is a trademark of Hasbro in the U.S. and Canada.

Sudoku

MEDIUM

	7		9				6	
8		6			5			
		5		8	6			1
3								
6		1				3		2
								6
4			6	2		9		
			4			2		5
	2				3		7	

Yesterday's Solution

4	1	3	9	5	2	8	7	6
5	9	2	7	8	6	1	4	3
6	7	8	3	4	1	2	9	5
9	8	6	2	3	7	4	5	1
1	3	5	6	9	4	7	2	8
7	2	4	5	1	8	3	6	9
3	6	7	8	2	5	9	1	4
2	4	9	1	6	3	5	8	7
8	5	1	4	7	9	6	3	2

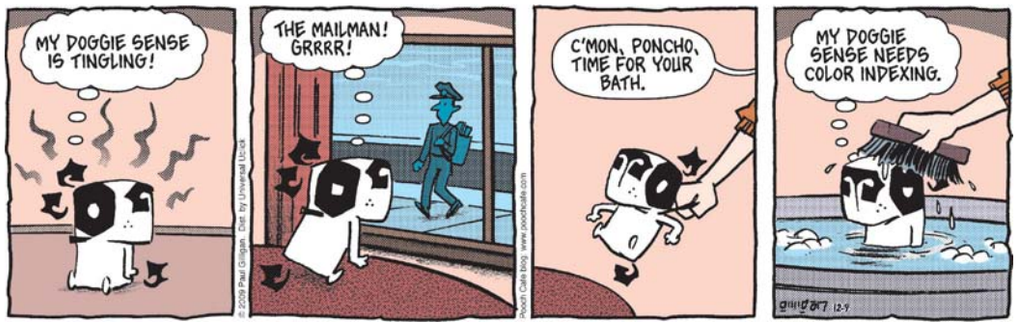
Need more Suldoku? Find another puzzle in the Comics section of the Post every Sunday and in the Style section Monday through Saturday.

© PUZZLES BY PAPPOCOM

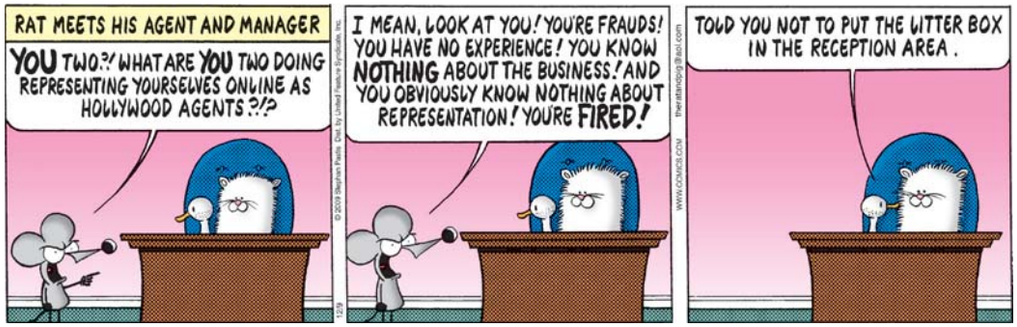
Comics

FIND MORE COMICS AT EXPRESSNIGHTOUT.COM

POOCH CAFE | PAUL GILLIGAN



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE | STEPHAN PASTIS



Forecast

50 | 35

Today: Rain ending this morning; windy this afternoon. Mainly clear tonight.

42 | 24

Tomorrow: Partly sunny, windy and colder tomorrow. Mainly clear tomorrow night.

Looking Ahead

FRI	SAT	SUN
41 | 26	37 | 29	35 | 30

Sun and Moon
Sunrise today: 7:15 a.m.
Sunset today: 4:46 p.m.
Moonrise today: 12:12 a.m.
Moonset today: 12:24 p.m.

Almanac
Normal high: 49
Record high: 74
Normal low: 34
Record low: 8

FORECAST BY ACCUWEATHER.COM ©2009

Are You Anxious?

Do you generally experience more tension, nervousness, or anxiety than your friends or family?

If so, you may be interested in participating in research studies involving:

- Thorough mental health assesment
- Brain imaging
- Emotional response tests
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- Be between 18-50 years of age, and medically healthy.

Financial compensation is available for participation.

For more information call:

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(TTY: 1-866-411-1010)

NIH Clinical Center is in Bethesda, MD

http://patientinfo.nimh.nih.gov

Protocol: 03-M-0185

National Institute of Mental Health

National Institutes of Health, Department of Health & Human Services

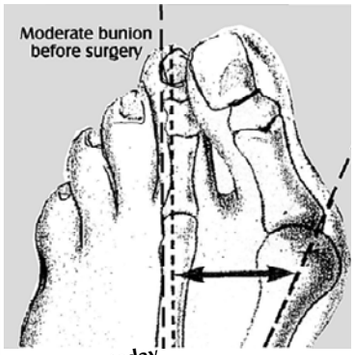
www.clinicaltrials.gov

NIMH National Institute of Mental Health

Bothered by Bunions?

If you have a painful bunion, contact the Chesapeake Research Group today. We are looking for qualified individuals to participate in a clinical research study that will evaluate the effectiveness of an investigational pain relieving medication following bunion removal. All procedures will be performed by the Chesapeake Foot and Ankle Center Podiatrists at the Chesapeake Ambulatory Surgery center in Pasadena, Maryland.

Dr. Ira Gotlieb • Dr. Jenny Nguyen • Dr. Enzo Leone



If you qualify for this study, you will receive:

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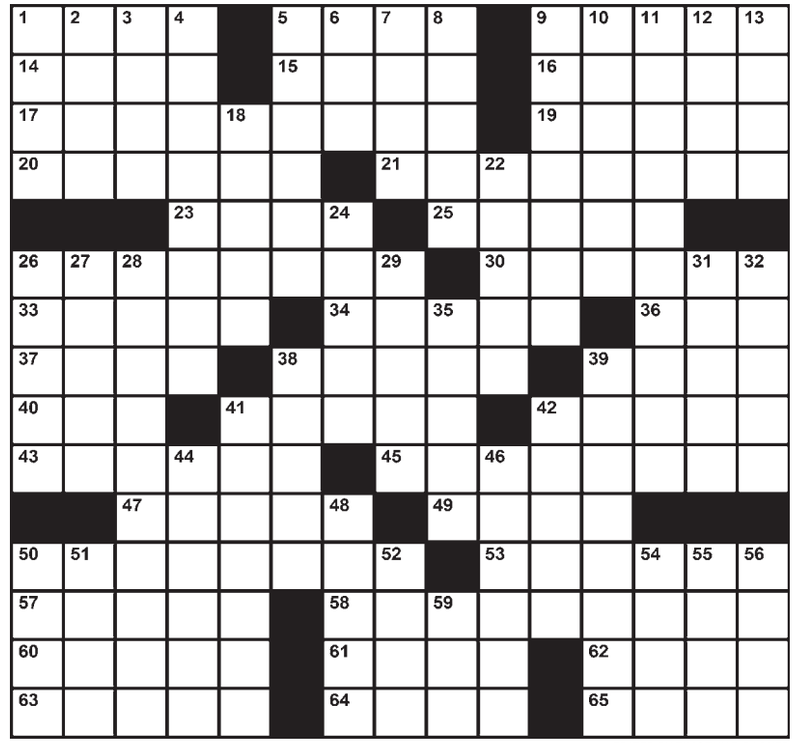
lookout puzzles

Crossword

A RELAXING PUZZLE



EDITED BY TIMOTHY E. PARKER

ACROSS

1 Have a thing for
5 Better than better
9 Equally melancholy
14 Curvy-horned goat
15 Wriggly, slippery and serpentine
16 Place for a book title
17 Relax
19 Abnormal growth
20 Help out
21 Certain transit worker
23 Cotton bundle
25 Sudden burst of voltage
26 Completeness
30 Menacingly wild
33 Watery castle barriers
34 "___ la vista, baby"
36 Syndicate head
37 Varieties or types
38 Male and female, e.g.
39 Party thrower
40 "Norma ___" (Sally Field film)
41 "77 Sunset ___"
42 Comparatively fresh
43 Sassy
45 Prominence
47 Refrain from singing?
49 Backing for plaster
50 Ones at the helm, essentially
53 Early manuscript versions
57 V-sign's meaning
58 Relax
60 Desert pit stop
61 One of the Great Lakes
62 Coastal bird
63 Lovers' get-together
64 Emulates Busta Rhymes
65 "Star Trek: ___ Space Nine"

DOWN

1 "Reader's Digest" co-founder Wallace
2 African wading bird
3 Frat party items
4 Museum displays
5 June bug, e.g.
6 Bard's nightfall
7 Area of poverty
8 Clerical errors
9 City on the Columbia River
10 Poinsettia, e.g.
11 Relax
12 Buffalo seen in crosswords
13 "Jurassic Park" actress Laura
18 Bygone autocrats
22 Medford, Mass., university
24 Certain anesthetic
26 Abu Dhabi biggies
27 Ryan in Cooperstown
28 Relax
29 Vertical graph component
31 Trig. function
32 Diary item
35 Part of a flower's calyx
38 Do a salon job
39 Brayed
41 Superlatively scanty
42 Prefix with "glycerin"
44 Terse summary
46 Soup kitchen needs
48 Ammo provider
50 Dalmatian feature
51 Dotted-line command
52 "Will be," in a Doris Day song
54 Bad driver's cry?
55 Adjust, as a guitar
56 1, 2 or 3, in a manual
59 Verbal defiance

Yesterday's Solution

Today in History

1793 Noah Webster establishes New York City's first daily newspaper, American Minerva.

1884 Ball-bearing roller skates are patented in the U.S.

1994 President Bill Clinton fires Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders after learning she said at a conference that masturbation should be discussed in school as a part of human sexuality.

express

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people lookout

NON-ISSUES

'We Have You at Your Worst Angle. Pay Up'

Two people in Michigan have been charged with threatening to sell photos of John Stamos unless he paid them $680,000. Allison Coss and Scott Sippola were arrested last week on an extortion charge at an airport near Marquette. An undercover FBI agent had arranged to meet them there. A Stamos spokesman said Tuesday the photos simply are of the actor posing with fans. **(AP)**

AILING

Woods' Mother-in-Law Rushed to Hospital

Emergency crews were summoned to Tiger Woods' Orlando-area mansion on Tuesday, this time because his mother-in-law was having stomach pains. Barbro Holmberg was taken to the hospital by ambulance after someone called 911 at about 2:35 a.m., a hospital spokesman said. She was released about 11 hours later and returned to Woods' home. **(AP)**

ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Whoever's up there doesn't have any sympathy for philanderers, dude.

Dirtbag Digest

Jon G. Worst Person On Earth

Hailey Glassman called ex-boyfriend Jon Gosselin a "monster" and a "compulsive liar" in an interview with Radaronline.com after her Monday deposition by TLC lawyers for the channel's breach-of-contract lawsuit against the reality TV star. "I was told under oath that Jon really did sleep with Kate Major," she said regarding one of Gosselin's alleged flings. "I'm mind-boggled and hurt." Meanwhile, Gosselin was seen eating alone in a mall on Monday. **(EXPRESS)**

DAVE HOGAN/GETTY IMAGES

One should never marry a man with four pocket flaps on his suit jacket.

MARRIAGE

Third Time, No Charm

Uma Thurman has called off her engagement to multimillionaire Arpad Busson, Usmagazine.com reported. The pair were betrothed this past June; the ring had an eight-carat diamond surrounded by 20 smaller stones. "She will probably give it back," a source told People.com. "She wants to return everything that's his." Despite reports that Busson is "beside himself," they "remain friends," the source said. Thurman was previously married to Ethan Hawke and Gary Oldman. **(EXPRESS)**

AILING

Bryant Gumbel Was Treated for Lung Cancer

Bryant Gumbel shocked a television audience with the news that he's recovering from lung cancer surgery and treatment. The former "Today" show anchor, 61, said a malignant tumor and part of his lung were removed two months ago. He revealed his condition to Kelly Ripa while subbing for Regis Philbin on Tuesday's edition of "Live With Regis and Kelly." **(AP)**

"They cried on the way home from school the other day. ... They kept asking, 'Where's the camera crew?'"

—KATE GOSSELIN, TO BARBARA WALTERS ON TONIGHT'S "THE 10 MOST FASCINATING PEOPLE OF 2009" SPECIAL. THE EIGHT KIDS, SHE SAYS, MISS BEING FILMED CONSTANTLY.

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THE KNOW YOUR OWN STRENGTH CHALLENGE

ATTENTION MARYLAND & D.C. Know Your Own Strength Hopefuls:

EXPRESS DIDN'T MEAN TO LEAVE YOU OUT!

We inadvertently failed to include all participating Gold's Gym locations on our contest entry page at www.expressnightout.com/kyos.

We've fixed our website and now ALL D.C., MARYLAND, AND VIRGINIA participating corporate locations have been included.

We apologize for the inconvenience.

We're extending the entry period by one week. That means you have until December 18th to enter!

It's Back And Better Than Ever!

Express is looking for

6 CHALLENGERS

for the Know Your Own Strength Challenge.

Make 2010 your year to GET IN SHAPE and you could

WIN $5,000

PLUS A ONE YEAR MEMBERSHIP TO GOLD'S GYM.

Beginning January 12,
The Know Your Own Strength Challenge will be followed weekly in Tuesday's Fit section of your Express.

As a challenger, you'll receive 12 weeks of personal training, guidance on healthy nutrition, and an unlimited 12 week pass to Gold's Gym.

express

Enter by December 18th at www.expressnightout.com/kyos.

No purchase necessary. Contest is sponsored by Gold's Gym International, Inc. & Express Publications, LLC. Contest is open only to legal residents of the District of Columbia, Maryland & Virginia who are 18 years of age or older at the time of entry. Void where prohibited by law. Entry period begins on 12/1/2009 at 12:01 am Eastern Time ("ET") & ends on 12/18/2009 at 11:59 pm Eastern Time ("ET") ("Entry Period"). To enter for a chance to compete in the challenge, complete the form on the contest entry page at www.expressnightout.com/kyos or send a 3.5 x 5" postcard with the required information (including a recent (taken within the last 60 days) photograph) from the contest entry page to: 2010 Gold's Gym Challenge; Express Marketing Dept., 1150 15th Street, NW, 7th floor, Washington, DC 20071. Limit 1 entry per person. Entrants will also be entered for a chance to win a one-year Gold's Gym membership. Contest participants will be chosen as explained in official rules. Winner of one - year membership will be selected by random drawing (ARV $600). Entry period for one year membership sweepstakes is 12/1/2009 at 12:01 am Eastern Time ("ET") & ends on 1/11/2010 at 11:59 pm Eastern Time ("ET") ("Entry Period"). Odds of winning will depend on the total number of eligible entries received for contest and one year membership sweepstakes. Contest and sweepstakes is subject to Official Rules; for a copy of Official Rules visit www.expressnightout.com/kyos.